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SUBJECT: INDO-PAK TALKS: ICE BROKEN ON ENGAGEMENT WITH
PAKISTAN

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1266
[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 1143

[1](#)1. (SBU) The meeting between Prime Minister Singh and Pakistani President Zardari on the margins of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Yekaterinburg on June 16 (ref A) continued to dominate headlines following press conferences by Prime Minister Singh June 17 and Foreign Secretary Menon June 16. Speaking from identical prepared statements, Singh and Menon each characterized the Indo-Pak relationship as "under considerable stress" due to "terrorist attacks against India from Pakistani territory." They both repeated India's "expectation that the Government of Pakistan take strong and effective action to prevent the use of Pakistan's territory for terrorist attacks against India, act against the perpetrators of past attacks, and dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism in Pakistan."

[1](#)2. (U) In response to questions from the media, Singh asserted that India "must try again to make peace with Pakistan," and repeated his earlier statement to Parliament that India would "meet them more than half-way" in this effort. He "wished Pakistan well" in dealing with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, but asked Pakistan to "show the same determination in dealing with terrorists who operate from Pakistan's soil and conduct acts of terror against our country."

[1](#)3. (U) Menon was clear that what happened in Yekaterinburg was not a resumption of a dialogue process, but merely a "meeting," correcting reporters who referred to it as part of a "dialogue" or "talks." Menon asserted that "the dialogue process has not commenced," but also made it clear that India "would like a dialogue." Menon stressed that his mandate for a planned follow-on meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Malik Ahmad Khan, was clear and narrow: to discuss Pakistan's counter-terrorism actions and progress to date, to lay out India's expectations for future action, and to report back to the Prime Minister prior to the next meeting between Singh and Zardari scheduled for July 16 on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Sharm El Sheikh.

[1](#)4. (U) Indian media continued to celebrate PM Singh's tough

but statesmanlike approach to Zardari, while more thoughtful outlets welcomed a resumption of engagement, if not a formal dialogue process. The Times of India editorialized that Singh struck "The Right Note," The Hindu welcomed "A Fresh Start," and the Indian Express was pleased to see movement "Beyond Binaries" of dialogue versus estrangement.

15. (SBU) COMMENT. While the Indian press continues to debate whether the meeting constitutes a resumption of the Composite Dialogue in all but name, the reality is that the ice is now broken on the possibility of regular, open, and direct engagement between India and Pakistan. Post will follow up with the principals themselves upon their return to India to discuss their next steps. END COMMENT.

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